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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

(For the period 11 to 17 August 2006)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 17 of its resolution 1701 (2006) of 11 August 2006, the Security Council requested that I report to it within one week on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. In its resolution 1701 (2006), the Council called upon the United Nations to assume a broad range of political, humanitarian and military responsibilities. Intensive work is proceeding on all fronts. The present report, however, focuses primarily on the steps taken and measures urgently required to consolidate the cessation of hostilities, in particular the withdrawal and deployment of forces in southern Lebanon and the rapid reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It also provides an assessment of the humanitarian situation and the action being taken by the United Nations to address it.

3. As concerns the political situation, I intend to submit to the Security Council by mid-September 2006, in connection with paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006), a more comprehensive report on significant developments, and to provide an update on the implementation of all the relevant provisions of the resolution. That report will be informed by the mission to the region of my Special Envoys, Terje Roed-Larsen and Vijay Nambiar, whom I dispatched on 18 August 2006. The aim of the mission is to provide full support to the process of implementation of Council resolution 1701 (2006). I acknowledge the respective invitation and request from the Council, contained in paragraphs 9 and 10 of resolution 1701 (2006), that I support efforts to secure from the parties as soon as possible agreements in principle on the principles and elements for a long-term solution, and that I develop, in liaison with relevant international actors and the concerned parties, proposals on the implementation of those principles. To this end, the mission will also initiate a process of consultation with the Governments of Israel and Lebanon and will report back directly to me on those matters.

II. Cessation of hostilities

4. I am greatly relieved to inform the Security Council that, as of the writing of the present report, the parties are generally complying with the cessation of hostilities called for in paragraph 1 of resolution 1701 (2006).

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5. As indicated in my letter dated 12 August 2006 to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/647), the cessation of hostilities went into effect at 0500 hours GMT on 14 August, which was the date and time mutually agreed to by the Prime Ministers of Israel and Lebanon in discussions with me following the adoption of the resolution.

6. I wrote to both Prime Ministers on 12 August to confirm the agreement. I also conveyed to them the expectation that, once the cessation of hostilities came into effect, the parties would cease firing into the territory of, or at, the other party, with any type of weapon from the ground, air or sea, and that no force should occupy or seek to take control of any additional territory from the other. In addition, I urged the parties to make every effort, in the interest of the civilian population on both sides, to continue to consolidate the cessation of hostilities and to move swiftly to convert it into a lasting ceasefire, in cooperation with UNIFIL, through the measures prescribed in resolution 1701 (2006).

7. On 12 August, the Government of Lebanon announced its acceptance of resolution 1701 (2006). On 13 August, the Government of Israel announced that it would act according to its obligations as outlined in the resolution.

8. Meanwhile, some of the heaviest fighting of the month-long conflict occurred during the 48-hour period prior to the cessation of hostilities coming into effect. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intensified shelling and aerial bombardment across Lebanon. Hizbollah launched a barrage of rockets into northern Israel. The two sides exchanged heavy fire on the ground, in particular in the area of Bayyadah, Al Jibbayn and Tayr Harfa in the western sector, and Mays al Jabal and Markaba in the central sector.

9. In the midst of the escalation of fighting in the final hours leading up to the cessation of hostilities, UNIFIL personnel endured 85 IDF-fired artillery shells impacting directly inside several positions, 35 in the area of Tibnin alone, in addition to 10 air-to-ground rockets and 108 artillery rounds landing in the immediate vicinity of these and other United Nations positions, including the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura. UNIFIL very fortunately did not suffer casualties but a number of positions sustained significant material damage. The mission strongly protested to IDF command throughout the period in question.

10. UNIFIL also strongly protested to the Lebanese authorities one incident of a Hizbollah-fired rocket impacting directly inside a UNIFIL position in the area of Ghanduriyah. The impact caused material damage but no casualties.

11. On the heels of this intensive fighting, the guns on all sides fell silent at 0500 hours GMT on 14 August, as agreed.

12. UNIFIL personnel emerged from shelters immediately to carry out intensive patrolling. The patrolling continued into the night, throughout its area of operation and in the "Tyre pocket" up to the Litani river, to assess the situation on the ground and to monitor the cessation of hostilities. UNIFIL also resumed air patrols over the area along the Blue Line the following day.

13. UNIFIL has reported only a handful of isolated violations of the cessation of hostilities since it came into effect. In one incident on 15 August, UNIFIL learned that IDF and Hizbollah had exchanged fire in the area of Haddathah in the central sector. It immediately dispatched patrols to the scene, to find the dead bodies of four

Hizbollah members, which were later taken away in an ambulance. In another incident on 16 August, an IDF tank positioned on the Israeli side fired one round across the Blue Line into Lebanese territory towards the village of Markaba in the central sector. There was no response from the other side and the situation in the area remained calm. UNIFIL observed one to four Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace daily. On 17 August 2006, a group of 100 armed elements in vehicles crossed into one of the sectors vacated by IDF near Al Qalay in the Marjayoun area and moved to the south. Also on 17 August, UNIFIL reported shepherds having crossed the Blue Line in the Shab'a farms area. UNIFIL strongly protested these incidents to both sides.

III. Deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces together with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and withdrawal of Israeli Forces

14. The implementation of paragraph 2 of resolution 1701, which calls on the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL to deploy their forces jointly throughout the south and for the Government of Israel to withdraw all of its forces from southern Lebanon, in parallel, is vital for enabling the cessation of hostilities to hold.

15. I am pleased to report that both parties have made constructive efforts to uphold their obligations in this regard. A significant first step was taken on 14 August just hours after the cessation of hostilities came into effect, when the two sides responded positively to a request from the UNIFIL Force Commander, Major-General Pellegrini, to jointly meet with him to coordinate their deployment and withdrawal plans, respectively. Major-General Dekel represented the Israeli Defense Forces and Major-General Shehaitly represented the Lebanese Armed Forces. The tripartite meeting, which was held at the UNIFIL position at the Ras Naqoura border crossing, was the first of its kind in over a decade.

16. At that and a subsequent meeting held on 16 August, the Lebanese side confirmed its desire and intention to deploy its forces to the south as quickly as possible, with the assistance of UNIFIL, to extend its authority in areas vacated by withdrawing Israeli forces. UNIFIL currently supports this deployment effort by the Lebanese Armed Forces, which involves three light infantry brigades, one armoured brigade and one armoured regiment.

17. For its part, the Israeli side provided information marked on a map of the areas occupied by its forces north of the Blue Line, encompassing 16 pockets/sectors. The Israeli side expressed its desire to withdraw its forces from all of the sectors as quickly as possible. IDF has provided maps showing mines and unexploded ordnance in the sectors from which it is withdrawing.

18. By mutual agreement, it was decided that a phased approach, by groups of sectors at a time, would be the most appropriate course of action. As per the understandings reached, in the first phase IDF vacated three sectors on 16 August. UNIFIL confirmed the withdrawal, established checkpoints and immediately commenced patrolling those areas. At the time of the writing of the present report, the Lebanese Armed Forces have deployed more than 1,500 troops, with vehicles of the 6th, 10th and 11th brigades, in the three sectors from which the Israel Defense Forces have withdrawn. UNIFIL checkpoints are now in place for monitoring the

second phase withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from two additional sectors on 18 August. UNIFIL verification of the withdrawal is being carried out. The Lebanese Armed Forces plan to deploy additional units into the three sectors, as well as deploy their forces into the two additional sectors on 19 August. Contrary to the understanding of the 14 August meeting, whereby IDF would withdraw from the remaining sectors in the third phase on 16 August, Israel indicated that the withdrawal from the remaining sectors would not be carried out in one stage. On 17 August, IDF presented a revised map dividing the remaining 11 sectors into up to four subsectors, from which withdrawal would take place on a step-by-step basis.

19. A third tripartite meeting was scheduled to be held on 20 August in order to agree upon the next sectors to be handed over, taking into account security, logistical and humanitarian considerations. The intention is to swiftly proceed in this methodical manner, convening tripartite meetings to coordinate and reach mutual agreement on each set of movements in advance, until the full withdrawal of Israeli forces and the full deployment, with support from UNIFIL, of Lebanese Armed Forces north of the Blue Line is complete. It would be premature to predict an exact date by which time that will occur, but it seems that all sides are working constructively towards that goal.

20. The initial phase of the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south has shown that significant support is required to carry out the process quickly and effectively. The requirements conveyed to the UNIFIL Force Commander include petrol, oil, spare parts, bottled water, tentage items, personal kits, small arms ammunition, camp items, generators, tyres, batteries, prefabricated office accommodation stores and a wide range of communication equipment. I urge Member States in a position to do so to support requests from the Government of Lebanon in addressing those requirements so as to avoid any delays in the tactical deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces. For its part, UNIFIL is already providing as much support as it can within its limited means.

IV. Reinforcement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

A. Concept of operations, force requirements and rules of engagement

21. A reinforced UNIFIL, as called for in paragraph 11 of resolution 1701 (2006), is a vital part of the package to enable the full deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south and, in parallel, the full withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon; monitor compliance with the cessation of hostilities; help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons; and establish conditions conducive to concluding a permanent ceasefire agreement and help to implement it. In meeting those and related objectives outlined in resolution 1701 (2006), UNIFIL would be making an essential contribution to enable the Government of Lebanon to extend its authority over all of its territory.

22. As admirably and courageously as the men and women of the currently 2,000-strong UNIFIL have performed throughout this crisis, they will not be able to do much more without a rapid and massive injection of additional forces. To that end,

since the adoption of the resolution I have been in contact with leaders around the world to appeal for contributions to UNIFIL. Within hours, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat initiated contact with military counterparts in the permanent missions in order to informally exchange views on the concept of operations, new force requirements and revised rules of engagement. The approach has been to seek and incorporate the views of potential contributors to the force so as to arrive at arrangements that will give them maximum confidence in their participation.

23. At a formal meeting of current and potential troop-contributing countries chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General on 17 August, Member States generally reacted positively to this approach to reinforce UNIFIL. At that meeting, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations presented a detailed briefing on the concept of operations, force requirements and revisions to the rules of engagement. All current contributors to UNIFIL, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), all members of the Security Council, all participants at the Rome Meeting held on 26 July and additional countries that had indicated interest to participate in the force were invited to attend. In total, some 70 countries were in attendance. Copies of the presentation were made available to participants after the meeting. This information should facilitate decision-making in capitals in the days ahead.

24. As the briefing at the meeting of troop-contributing countries and the documents made available already make clear, the most urgent need will be to reinforce UNIFIL, between 17 August and 2 September, with up to 3,500 additional personnel, consisting of the following capabilities: three mechanized infantry battalions; one light reconnaissance battalion; one engineer battalion (combat); one engineer battalion (construction); two signal companies; one military police company; one headquarters company; and a maritime unit for patrolling the coastline. Those requirements do not yet take into account any additional needs that may be identified as a result of further requests for UNIFIL assistance by the Lebanese Armed Forces as their deployment to the south continues.

25. The main effort of the first wave of additional forces will be to reinforce the military capabilities of the existing UNIFIL, with special attention to rear area security and security of the lines of communication, as well as to support the handover by IDF to the Lebanese Armed Forces of occupied locations in southern Lebanon, while preventing attempts by forceful means to disrupt the process. Deployment would be focused on establishing a presence in the Tyre pocket and supplementing existing positions held by the Indian and Ghanaian battalions. A detailed list of potential tasks flowing from this main effort has been shared with potential troop-contributing countries.

26. We have also shared with potential troop-contributing countries a draft of the concept of operations and of the new robust rules of engagement, which are being revised to cater to the additional tasks and authority assigned to UNIFIL in resolution 1701 (2006). The most significant revisions pertain to the authorization of the use of force consistent with paragraph 12 of resolution 1701 (2006).

27. Assuming that the cessation of hostilities continues to hold and that there is no significant change in the situation on the ground, a second wave of reinforcements, consisting of up to an additional 3,500 forces, would be required in theatre between 3 September and 5 October. The following capabilities would be required: three

mechanized infantry battalions; two light reconnaissance battalions; one engineer battalion; two signal companies; one helicopter unit for observation and reconnaissance; one helicopter unit for medium-lift capacity; one military police company; one level II hospital; one logistics battalion; and two sector headquarters and headquarter companies. The main effort of the second wave would be to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in the achievement of full operational capacity.

28. A third and final wave of reinforcements, consisting of up to an additional 3,000 troops, will be required to arrive in theatre between 5 October and 4 November. The following capabilities will be required: two mechanized infantry battalions; one gendarmerie battalion; and one cartographic section. The main effort of UNIFIL, at that time should remain focused on assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces in the achievement of full operational capacity, as well as verifying and monitoring the compliance of the parties with all relevant provisions of resolution 1701 (2006).

29. In summary, our hope would be for the full strengthening of UNIFIL called for in paragraph 11 of resolution 1701 (2006) to have been completed within less than 90 days of the resolution's adoption. In the event that another Security Council resolution is adopted mandating UNIFIL with significant new and additional tasks, additional forces could be required up to, or above, the authorized strength of 15,000 troops, consistent with paragraph 16 of resolution 1701 (2006).

30. It must be understood, however, that the phases of deployment and disposition of UNIFIL troops may need to be adjusted as circumstances dictate. The concept of operations and force requirements shared with the troop-contributing countries on 17 August were developed within an extremely short time frame, against the backdrop of a fragile cessation of hostilities and a fluid situation on the ground. Adherence to the deployment time frame, as described above, will depend on the required capabilities being made available by Member States, as requested.

B. Commitments to date

31. A number of commitments were confirmed at the meeting of troop-contributing countries on 17 August. Some of these commitments were, however, made subject to parliamentary approval. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations will work closely with these and other countries that have indicated an interest to contribute to UNIFIL, to expedite the initial deployment of a coherent and balanced force of up to 3,500 all ranks, and to ensure that the concept of operations and the rules of engagement are fully understood and supported. While the commitments made were encouraging, further commitments are urgently needed, in particular as regards enabling units.

C. Logistics support

32. UNIFIL has established a rear UNIFIL administrative headquarters in Cyprus with facilities provided by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). This headquarters is carrying out routine administration in finance, personnel and procurement on behalf of the mission and is coordinating movement of personnel and material to Naqoura by sea and air. Two MI-8 helicopters and a chartered medium-size logistic ship (*MV Kiriaki*) are now in Cyprus to provide rapid

movement of personnel, medical evacuation and resupply. Preparations are being made to use facilities in Cyprus for the transit of troops and equipment to Naqoura, if direct deployment through Lebanese airports and ports is not practicable owing to congestion and the state of disrepair of roads and bridges.

33. A logistics planning team will arrive in Cyprus during the weekend of 19 and 20 August to travel to Naqoura to assist the mission in developing a logistic concept for support of the expanded force. Plans are advanced for the deployment of strategic deployment stocks from the United Nations Logistics Base to southern Lebanon.

D. Flexibility in administrative arrangements to ensure rapid deployment

34. The expansion of UNIFIL will require extensive and immediate augmentation of the support infrastructure and sustainment capabilities of the current mission. To facilitate this and the rapid deployment of the additional troops, I have granted the Secretariat, on an exceptional basis, a degree of flexibility in the application of administrative processes governing the assignment of human resources, the deployment of contingents, the extension and increase in the value of support contracts, delegations for financial management and procurement, and utilization of exigency provisions within the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the Staff Rules. In this respect, I have written to the President of the General Assembly, informing Member States of the extraordinary measures in place to enable the efficient and effective implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

35. Under the measures described above, deployment of contingents will be fast-tracked, waiving the requirement for pre-inspections and the signing of a memorandum of understanding in advance. Contingents will deploy based on broad agreement of the composition of the force provided through load lists and the conditions under which the contingent will be sustained in the mission area. I have also given approval for the use of letters of assist with troop-contributing countries to facilitate the strategic lift of contingents and their equipment, where the costs are reasonable based on experience with current commercial rates. Small numbers of gratis personnel will be deployed for limited periods to facilitate military planning by the troop-contributing countries without the requirement for the two-month notification of all Member States. I request the understanding of Member States of the necessity for these special arrangements.

36. To facilitate the rapid build-up of civilian support staff, I have waived the requirement for advertisement of the post when a lateral transfer at the same level and post nomenclature is involved. As appropriate, these personnel will retain existing delegations of authority, pending completion of the formal designation process, which will follow in due course. I have also authorized relief from the present three-month limit on temporary deployment of civilian staff. General temporary assistance provisions will be used to augment planning staff at Headquarters and in the field.

37. In addition, immediate provision is being made to increase the not-to-exceed level of existing commodity contracts (i.e., for fuel, rations, water and accommodation) of UNIFIL and UNFICYP (which will provide some logistics

support to UNIFIL, as well as increasing the not-to-exceed level of global systems contracts in support of both missions.

38. While the exact nature of support to assist the deployment of Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon is not known at this time, I have authorized the use of letters of assist with non-UNIFIL troop-contributing countries to provide support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, where it is prudent to do so.

E. Headquarters support structures

39. The scope and complexity of military tasks to be performed by UNIFIL may require further strengthening of the Military Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. A military cell, dedicated to UNIFIL, drawing on the existing resources of the Military Division and augmented by officers from key troop-contributing countries, will be needed to provide military guidance at the strategic level.

F. Financial aspects

40. Immediate steps have been taken to provide additional funding for the expansion of UNIFIL. I have sought the concurrence of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to enter into commitments not to exceed $50 million to meet the most immediate and essential preparatory steps to constitute a planning team, conduct strategic lift of the additional forces and initiate procurement actions for necessary goods and services, including additional requirements for air transportation, naval transportation, facilities and infrastructure. A further request for additional commitment authority will be sought within the next few weeks to cover the period from August 2006 until the end of March 2006, pending the submission of the detailed budget for the expansion of UNIFIL for the period 11 August 2006 to 30 June 2007. This additional financing request will be submitted to the General Assembly, through the Advisory Committee, for consideration during the regular part of its sixty-first session.

41. I would also like to inform the Advisory Committee that, in addition to the immediate requirement of $50 million indicated above, the appropriation for UNIFIL for the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 in the amount of $97,579,600, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/278 of 30 June 2006, shall be used flexibly to meet the requirements of the expanded UNIFIL.

V. Humanitarian assistance for security measures, Government of Lebanon security measures and mine action

A. General humanitarian situation

42. The month-long hostilities have had a traumatic impact on the civilian population in Lebanon. Almost 1 million people have been displaced, about 1,200 are recorded dead and thousands injured, the majority of them women and children. The number of fatalities continues to rise as the cessation of hostilities allows more

bodies to be recovered. The damage to essential infrastructure, residential housing and the economy is severe. An estimated 15,000 apartments have been destroyed and 140 bridges hit. Initial assessments, for example, indicate that in the villages of Ghanduriyah and Zibqin more than 60 per cent of residential housing has been destroyed.

43. The announcement of the cessation of hostilities, however, has prompted an immediate and massive movement of displaced populations returning to their home communities. It is estimated that despite numerous cautionary messages from the Government of Lebanon and international aid organizations, 400,000 people, including 107,000 who have returned from the Syrian Arab Republic, have returned to the southern suburbs of Beirut and other areas further south. The almost 800 public institutions, schools and buildings temporarily occupied by up to 150,000 displaced persons are now virtually empty, thereby significantly easing the stress on host communities.

44. The key priorities for the humanitarian community during this immediate post-ceasefire phase are: (a) providing assistance along routes of return and to home communities, including shelter materials; (b) securing sustained access for humanitarian convoys and speedy aid distribution to the most vulnerable; (c) addressing prevailing security risks for relief workers and returnees, primarily owing to the proliferation of unexploded ordnance; and (d) carrying out repairs to basic infrastructure, such as water pumps.

45. An oil spill into the Mediterranean Sea of at least 15,000 tons of heavy fuel has spread along 150 kilometres of the coast, following the bombing by IDF of an oil storage depot at Jiyeh, south of Beirut, on 13 and 15 July, leaving an immediate severe impact on the fishing community and the tourism sector and potential long-term consequences for public health owing to an increased risk of cancer. Efforts to clean up the spill got under way with the cessation of hostilities. On 17 August, a high-level meeting was convened by the International Maritime Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme in Athens, to finalize an international assistance action plan. The $64 million plan will assist the authorities in Lebanon with the clean-up of coastal oil pollution and is geared towards preventing any damage to neighbouring countries. Several countries and other partners have also pledged personnel, training and equipment for the clean-up.

46. The hostilities also claimed the lives of 170 Israelis, including 52 civilians killed by rocket fire. More than 600 civilians were injured. Between 300,000 and 500,000 Israeli civilians either fled their homes or remained in shelters during the conflict. Since the cessation of hostilities, residents of the north have begun to return en masse to their homes. The Government of Israel reports extensive damage to private properties, hospitals and schools, as well as to more than 60,000 acres of forest and open fields by fires created by rocket fire. The Government is responding with an emergency aid package for northern towns and villages, and UNSCO has invited the Israeli authorities to approach the United Nations if they require assistance to support those efforts.

B. Humanitarian action

47. Throughout the hostilities, in particular in the south of Lebanon, persistent security concerns and widespread infrastructure damage owing to ongoing combat

operations severely limited access to vulnerable civilian populations by humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Lebanese Red Cross and non-governmental organizations.

48. The absence of hostilities itself has greatly improved the frequency and quantity of humanitarian assistance. Within 96 hours of the cessation of hostilities, 20 convoys totalling 118 trucks have been dispatched to locations in the south, including Saida, Tyre, Rmaish and Marjayoun, and various locations in the Bekaa valley, despite increasingly congested roads owing to the stream of returns. A first United Nations vessel delivered relief goods and fuel to the port of Tyre for onward distribution into the south and a more regular naval shuttle between Beirut and Tyre is envisaged. A twice-weekly passenger service has commenced from Cyprus to Beirut.

49. Humanitarian agencies have also provided food, water, medicines, blankets and other shelter materials to returnees at border crossings and en route. In home communities, the United Nations convoys have delivered fuel for generators and water pumps, food and bottled water. The United Nations is also setting up tented camps in return locations in the south to provide temporary shelter until houses can be repaired. Winterization kits are being procured to allow returnees to refurbish "one warm room" during the upcoming winter months. The United Nations is also providing medicines and medical equipment to hospitals across the south, establishing a capacity that will allow for 120,000 emergency operations and instant medical assistance to the war-wounded and sick. Rapid needs assessments are under way, including on infrastructure damage, housing, and unexploded ordnance, in close cooperation with the Government of Lebanon. The first unexploded ordnance clearance operations are already taking place, in parallel with the continuing public information campaigns by the Government of Lebanon and United Nations agencies. In areas still not accessible to humanitarian agencies, including Al Hinniyah, Zibqin, Bint Jbeil, Kafra and Bayt Leif, UNIFIL has distributed food and water. UNIFIL has also engaged in medical evacuations of the war-wounded from villages near the Blue Line.

C. Sixty-day plan

50. It is expected that United Nations humanitarian response efforts will peak during the next 60 days and then gradually evolve into a recovery and reconstruction response, coordinated by the Government of Lebanon. A three-stage humanitarian action plan lays out a concept of decentralized humanitarian operations in close proximity to target populations, primarily returnees. The already existing humanitarian hubs in Beirut and Tyre are being further strengthened and additional hubs have been established in Saida, Tripoli and Zahle. The United Nations and its partners will move significant stocks of supplies into those hubs for onward distribution into the most affected areas. Decentralized security operations linked to the humanitarian hubs will ensure safety and security of humanitarian staff. Emergency infrastructure repairs through the Lebanese Armed Forces, private initiatives and UNIFIL will support the enhanced humanitarian response on the ground.

D. Remaining obstacles

51. Despite significant progress within the first days of the cessation of hostilities in reaching people previously cut off from aid supplies, massive access problems remain the key obstacles to further accelerating the humanitarian response. The enormous damage to most road and bridge infrastructures leading to the south merits lifting the continuing sea and air blockade on Lebanon as soon as possible, within the terms of Council resolution 1701 (2006). In view of the speed and scale of return movements, obtaining full and unrestricted access to all means of transportation on the most direct route will be critical for the successful delivery of assistance by the United Nations, its partners and the Government of Lebanon.

E. Government of Lebanon security measures

52. In response to paragraphs 6 and 14 of resolution 1701 (2006), the Government of Lebanon has initiated changes in security personnel and procedures at Rafiq Hariri International Airport and has established a new security coordination committee. I have also learned of the arrival in Beirut during the weekend of 19 and 20 August of international experts who have been asked by the Government of Lebanon to provide technical assistance and professional assessment of security procedures at border crossings.

F. Mine action and unexploded ordnance

53. The conflict resulted in considerable unexploded ordnance contamination south of the Litani River and in areas in the north and east of the country. The widespread contamination of unexploded ordnance and mines has already led to maiming injuries and deaths among returnees to the South. Initial assessments of the Mines Advisory Group, a United Kingdom non-governmental organization, indicated that unexploded ordnance contamination in Lebanon was on a far higher scale than that identified in Iraq after the end of the war in 2003. Bombs, missiles, rockets, mortars, cluster bomblets and other sub-munitions litter routes, housing and the debris that must be cleared for reconstruction to commence. In the days since the cessation of hostilities went into affect, reports of civilian casualties, most notably from cluster bomblets and sub-munitions, have already been reported. The contamination presents a significant obstacle to humanitarian efforts and a threat to men, women, boys and girls returning to their homes and daily activities.

54. The United Nations Mine Action Team, coordinated by the United Nations Mine Action Service, is supporting the existing structures within the Government of Lebanon and civil society, specifically the National Demining Office and the National Mine Risk Education Steering Committee. The first response to protect civilians has included mine/unexploded ordnance risk education in Lebanon and, for refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, unexploded ordnance safety training for humanitarian workers operating in affected areas and the imminent deployment of explosive ordnance disposal and battle area clearance teams to support humanitarian efforts. Those teams will bolster the response of Lebanese Armed Forces engineers and the Mines Advisory Group, a non-governmental organization. These activities will be coordinated by the Mine Action Co-ordination Centre — South Lebanon, located in Tyre, under the guidance of the United Nations Mine Action Service. I

urge Member States to provide contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action to ensure that all of those vital activities can be realized.

55. The UNIFIL mine-clearance efforts are focused on the clearance of contamination in observation posts, patrol bases and other Mission facilities to ensure the safety of mission personnel and prepare for the expansion of UNIFIL. As the United Nations Mine Action Service deploys assets, it will coordinate with UNIFIL assets to ensure the most effective use of resources. With the deployment of the expanded UNIFIL, it is essential that the engineering units requested to reinforce UNIFIL possess explosive ordnance disposal capacity.

VI. Observations

56. I am encouraged by the positive first steps that have followed the coming into effect of the cessation of hostilities. However, I would caution that the situation is still very fragile. I call on all parties to do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and to transform it into a durable ceasefire.

57. I would stress that continued support for prompt humanitarian action and reconstruction is an essential element in solidifying the situation. As larger areas of the south along the Blue Line become accessible, the humanitarian aid effort will need to accelerate to ensure that the basic needs of the civilian population for shelter, food and medical assistance can be met. Preparations for longer-term stabilization and development assistance, in coordination with and supported by the Government of Lebanon, need to be accelerated to ensure a speedy recovery process.

58. I welcome the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to enhance its security procedures at its airports, harbours and border crossings. I would encourage the Government of Lebanon to take advantage of other available expertise to put in place the necessary arrangements. I look forward to the reopening of Lebanon's airports and harbours. I would also stress that Lebanon's neighbours have a duty to implement paragraphs 14 and 15 of resolution 1701 (2006).

59. I very much welcome the significant and historic step by the Government of Lebanon to deploy the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south of the country while IDF continues its withdrawal. I note in particular the Lebanese national consensus, involving all parties, which led to the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south. I have also been pleased with the strong Lebanese consensus in support of the enhanced role of UNIFIL.

60. I strongly appeal to Member States to reinforce UNIFIL on an emergency basis, as called for in resolution 1701 (2006) and by the parties. I would stress that the most urgent requirement is to provide UNIFIL with an additional 3,500 personnel, along the lines outlined in the present report, by 2 September. The Secretariat has done its part in seeking and incorporating the views and concerns of potential troop-contributing countries in the development of the force concept of operations and rules of engagement. It is now up to Member States to do their part in translating expressions of interest into the immediate provision of actual troops on the ground.

61. A reinforced UNIFIL is not going to wage war on any of the actors in the theatre. It is not expected to achieve by force what must be realized through

negotiation and an internal Lebanese consensus. Nor can a reinforced UNIFIL be a substitute for a political process. That political process, however, will need the kind of help, assistance and confidence that only a robust peacekeeping presence can provide, in support of the Government of Lebanon and its efforts to exercise its authority effectively throughout its territory.

62. I call on both the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel to work resolutely towards a long-term solution and a permanent ceasefire. I have been in close touch with the Prime Ministers of Lebanon and Israel, respectively, as well as key leaders in the region and internationally. I also look forward to hearing back from the mission that is currently in the region.

63. While one of the immediate triggers of the crisis was the abduction of Israeli soldiers, their unconditional release is only one of the many measures still to be taken and the painful compromises that will have to be made by both sides in the interests of peace for the peoples of Lebanon and Israel. In this context, although it is a separate issue, the Security Council has stated that it is mindful of the sensitivity of the issue of the prisoners and has encouraged efforts to urgently settle the issue of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel.

64. I call on all States in the region to support and encourage the parties to take the right steps to solidify the cessation of hostilities and develop a framework for the permanent solution to which the peoples of the region have aspired for so long.

65. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my representatives in the region, Alvaro de Soto and Geir O. Pedersen, to the UNTSO Chief of Staff, Major-General Clive Lilley, and to all United Nations staff in the region for their dedication, perseverance and commitment to peace and security. The UNIFIL Force Commander, Major-General Alain Pellegrini, and all the men and women of UNIFIL and the Observer Group Lebanon deserve a special tribute for their courage and bearing during the hostilities, when they were exposed to extreme danger.